

BUTTE / AREA

Wolves killed near Dillon after repeated attacks

By NICK GEVOCK
of The Montana Standard

Federal trappers killed five wolves in the Grasshopper Valley west of Dillon after the pack had repeatedly attacked and killed cattle on private ranches.

The pack, which was unnamed, had been seen with up to seven members, said Carolyn Sime, wolf program coordinator for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. It started causing trouble in December when it killed a calf.

Another calf was killed on a different ranch in early

January and FWP issued kill permits to three ranchers in the area, she said. A wolf was shot and killed by a trapper with U.S. Wildlife Services on Jan. 8.

But the attacks didn't stop. The pack killed two calves and was suspected of injuring a third a week later. Trappers shot four more wolves Jan. 17.

"We had initially authorized incremental control and the number of wolves authorized to be killed increased as the number of cattle increased," Sime said.

A member of the pack that survived was collared and has been spotted with one other wolf, Sime said.

It's unclear whether those two are siblings or will mate this spring.

Sime said it's also unclear whether these are the same wolves that repeatedly attacked cattle in the Big Hole Valley east of Wisdom last fall. That pack killed five cows on the Loren Giem's ranch and trappers were unable to kill or capture any of the pack.

"As the bird flies, it's really not all that far," Sime said of the two areas that have had problems.

"Monitoring of this collared wolf will be really important to determine where it goes."

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